DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 198 107 SP 017 391

AUTHOR Brown, L. M.: Edelson, R.
TITLE The Field Trip in Teacher Education: Expanding Horizons.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Comparative Analysis: *Cultural Differences: Experiential Learning: *Field Trips: Higher Education: *Preservice Teacher Education: Teaching Methods: *Travel

ABSTRACT

Field trips for preservice teachers as an integral part of academic coursework appear to positively influence student understanding of diverse educational techniques and problems, and the educational needs of diverse cultural and ethnic populations. A description is given of a field trip to Mexico for students in an introductory early childhood education course. This internationally oriented field trip provided an experiential base for the students to gain first-hand insight into the educational problems facing cultural groups that are other than American. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED198107

The Field Trip in Teacher Education:

Expanding Horizons

L. M. Brown
Assistant Professor
Department of Earth Sci/Math/Physics
Lake Superior State College

(B.A., Cornell College; M. S. University of Iowa; Ph. D., University of New Mexico)

R. Edelson
Assistant Professor
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
New Mexico State University

(B.A., University of Michigan; M.A., Ed. D., Teachers College, Columbia University)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lewis M. Brown

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP017 391

THE FIELD TRIP IN TEACHER EDUCATION: EXPANDING HORIZONS

By

L. M. Brown

R. Edelson

The field trip as a university-level instructional technique has been utilized in many discipline areas in order to facilitate student conceptual awareness. The science disciplines have incorporated field trips as a basic instructional strategy[1] and some courses are taught with field trips as the central focus.[2] Summer field courses have recently come into vogue in many disciplines including the humanities[3] and a recent attempt has been made to involve senior citizens in educational pursuits through geographically oriented field experiences.[4]

The value of internationally oriented field trips for public school teachers and university professors has been recognized and vacation-time tours have been organized by societies such as National Education Association and American Education Research Association. However, few pre-service teacher training programs utilize field trips as an integral part of academic year coursework.

Although the trend in teacher education has been to emphasize more practical experience and on-site observation, these activities are limited primarily to the geographical area immediately surrounding the university. Therefore, students' experiential base is limited to local practices with little opportunity to gain first-hand insight into the educational problems facing diverse communities and cultural groups. To meet this educational need, the authors have utilized field trips as an integral part of elementary and secondary teacher preparation coursework.

Three and four day trips have been taken to urban and rural districts in the United States and Mexico. The districts visited provide examples of innovative teaching methodologies implemented to meet culturally diverse student population needs. A primary objective of such visits is to better understand significant regional and cultural differences in the teaching and learning process and to gain first-hand experiences and insights into concepts of international comparative education.

To effectively utilize the field trip as an instructional strategy, three instructional stages are employed: the preparation phase, a description of the districts, and discussion of local educational problems. Once on-site, a significant amount of time is provided for each student to observe a variety of classroom settings and with one child of a cultural background different from that of the student. The culminating experience is an integrative seminar in which observations, thoughts, intuitions and feelings are shared, discussed, and related to the theoretical and practical objectives of the course.

An example of a recent field trip to Chihuahua, Mexico, for students in an introductory Early Childhood Education class is noteworthy. Public school teacher education, administration, pedagogical techniques, support materials and educational facilities in Mexico were discussed and observed. A synthesis of student observations follows.

The people. Teachers and students of the public schools are highly motivated.

Educational facilities. Public education is housed in state and

federal buildings without central heat or air conditioning. Classrooms occasionally have wood burning stoves, are often dimly lighted, and contain a minimum of 45 pupils, arranged two to a desk. Desks consist of wooden boards and benches. Some classrooms serve as storage areas and are filled with doors, windows and various construction material.

Support materials. Teachers have a blackboard and chalk with which to work. Each students is issued a government-authorized textbook and most, but not all, students have notebooks in which to write. Each teacher is issued one supplementary text. Other materials are unavailable; paper must be requisitioned from the government.

Pedagogical techniques. Lesson delivery is formal and inflexible in accordance with government-prescribed procedures. All children do the same activity at the same time; individualization of instruction is not attempted. All lessons are based on the text issued to the students; hands-on experiential learning techniques are not utilized; audio visual equipment is unavailable. Subject matter revolves around language arts, math, natural science, social science, fine arts, technological education and physical education. Physical education is heavily emphasized.

Administration. Classes meet five hours with one shift in the A.M., one in the P.M. A teacher is responsible for one five-hour shift. Each building has a principal and each area is administered by a supervisor. Supervisors ensure that government regulations are being met and curriculum guidelines followed. They meet weekly with area principals and report to the Assistant State Director who, in turn, reports to the State Director for Education.

Teacher education. Students between 15 and 18 years of age enroll in normal school for four years of training. They are guaranteed teaching positions upon graduation providing they are willing to accept rural assignments for a minimum of one year. Teacher training is formal and inflexible. There are no elective courses; all students complete all assignments at the same time. Classes are highly structured; content is stressed, with little attention given to process. Library facilities are extremely limited.

The above student observations, shared during the integrative seminar, show insights and understandings regarding education in Chihuahua, Mexico. The students also exhibited sensitivity to the people, teachers and children they encountered. The intensity of this personal involvement is demonstrated by the following sample comments.

> ...as for the directors, teachers, supervisors: it really made me feel good to know and see that they'll do everything they can to improve the education in Mexico...
>
> ...The school for the mentally retarded was very impressive...somebody has the heart and patience to understand their needs...it's wonderful to know that parents are willing to help their kids advance...
>
> ...teachers are willing and eager, dedicated...
>
> ...I haven't in three years learned as much as I have these past two days...

In summary, field trips for pre-service teachers as an integral part of academic coursework appears to positively influence student

understanding of diverse educational techniques, diverse educational problems, and the educational needs of diverse cultural and ethnic populations. Such broad based, experientially oriented conceptual development would appear to be a working objective of many teacher education programs.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Wolf, Walter A., Ed., "Chem Ed Compacts," Journal of Chemical Education, V. 53, N. 6, p. 370, Jun 76.

[2] Hoffman, James I. and Feeter, C. W., "Field Trip Modules as Complete Substitutes for Weekly Introductory Geology Laboratories," Journal of Geological Education, V. 23, N. 1, p. 18-19, Jan 75.

[3] Romey, Bill, "In Search of Drifting Continents: A Field Program in East Africa and Related Course Activities," Journal of Geological Education, V. 23, N. 4, p. 116-122, Sept 75.

[4] Stone, A., "Field Trips, Catalysts for Senior Citizen Education," Journal of Geography, V. 75, p. 276-9, May 76.